Summary

The California Department of Transportation (the Department) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) propose to improve freeway capacity and promote use of transit and carpools on Interstate 15 (I-15), in the cities of San Diego and Escondido, in San Diego County, California. The work would be located from 2.4 kilometers (1.5 miles) south of State Route 163 (SR-163) in San Diego to 0.5 kilometer (0.3 mile) north of State Route 78 (SR-78) in Escondido, a distance of 34.0 kilometers (21.1 miles).

Reliance on the I-15 corridor for fulfilling the daily transportation needs of both local and regional users is greater within the project corridor than on any other portion of the I-15 freeway in San Diego County. The resolve of agencies, communities, legislators, and business leaders is to work cooperatively to help expedite improvements to the I-15 freeway.

Purpose and Need

The proposed project is needed to expand and manage I-15 to better handle the current and future traffic needs between San Diego and Escondido, in San Diego County. The purpose of this project is consistent with the 2020 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The purpose of the project project is to reduce commute travel time as compared to existing travel time, accommodate a High-Speed Bus Rapid Transit System, Implement principles of "smart growth" land use strategy by providing transportation options, and support the goals of the District's high occupancy vehicle (HOV) plan and the RTP.

Proposed Alternatives

Constructing the Managed Lanes Project is the only build alternative proposed, however, final selection of this alternative would not be made until after the full evaluation of environmental impacts, and full consideration of public hearing comments. The final selection would be published in the Negative Declaration/Finding of No Significant Impact.

The Managed Lanes Project proposes outside widening of the existing freeway lanes on one or both sides to accommodate four “managed lanes” within the median. The lanes are considered managed since they allow the flexibility to alter lane configurations through the use of a moveable barrier, thus improving freeway capacity for HOV and transit users in the peak direction.

The managed lanes would be available to HOV, buses, and single occupancy vehicles (SOV).See Figure S-1 for a typical cross section of the proposed facility. The proposed project will be partially funded through the use of FHWA Congestion Management Air Quality (CMAQ) funds which are set aside for HOV and Bus projects. SOV traffic would be permitted on the managed lanes as a part of the Value Pricing program.

Some new right-of-way would be required for temporary construction easements, grading and drainage easements, retaining wall footing easements, and soil-nail and tieback easements. There would be no displacement of homes or businesses. Minor impacts would result from the use of several of these parcels. Mitigation for these impacts are included in the mitigation as described in the following summary section: Environmental impacts and measures to Minimize Harm.

On the four proposed managed lanes, traffic would flow in both directions. A moveable barrier system is proposed within the managed lanes so the four lanes can be oriented in three different configurations. The possible configurations are:

- One lane northbound and three lanes southbound.
- Two lanes northbound and two lanes southbound.
- Three lanes northbound and one lane southbound.

To accommodate the new lanes, many existing overcrossing structures in the I-15 corridor would require replacement.

The managed lanes would be separated from the general use freeway lanes by a concrete barrier with intermediate access areas available. This would increase driver comfort and would allow for a protected location for the many required hardware features. These features could safely be mounted on the concrete barrier.

Fixed concrete barriers would separate the managed lanes from the main lanes with access openings at three to five kilometer (two to three mile) intervals. In addition, to accommodate HOV and bus transit centers (proposed by others) located throughout the corridor, direct access ramps would connect from local streets directly into the managed lanes. Direct access ramps are proposed in the communities of Sabre Springs, and Rancho Bernardo. In addition, direct access ramps are proposed in the City of Escondido near North County Fair, and at Hale Avenue (see figures 2-12, 2-17, 2-22, and 2-27 for locations of the direct access ramps).

In addition to the Managed Lanes Project, the no build alternative is also being considered. The no build alternative assumes that no part of the proposed action would be constructed. Even though the Managed Lanes would not be built with this alternative, other operational improvements such as pavement rehabilitation, ramp meters, and changeable message signs would be made within the corridor under separate future project approvals.

Environmental Impacts and Measures to Minimize Harm

With the Managed Lanes Project, there would be minimal to no impact on land use, social and economic conditions, relocation and property acquisition, air quality, historic and archaeological preservation, joint development, wildlife, floodplains, water quality, and hazardous waste.

With the Managed Lane Project, the following environmental issues would be raised:

Pedestrian and Bike Facilities

At Lake Hodges, both temporary and permanent construction impacts would occur. Replacement of the bridge may result in temporary trail closures to allow equipment movement across the trail and during bridge demolition and reconstruction. A five day closure of this trail would be required during construction. Detours would be required during construction on the bike path located on the east side of I-15 between Erma Road and Scripps Ranch Boulevard. This bike path will remain open during construction. On SR-56 near the I-15 interchange, the existing bike path will be temporarily closed during construction, however bikes will be permitted to share the traffic lanes. At the Escondido Flood Control Channel Undercrossing, the bike and pedestrian path will be maintained during construction.

Sensitive Noise Receptors

Noise modeling showed that 204 of 384 modeled noise-sensitive receivers would approach or exceed the Noise Abatement Criteria as defined in the Caltrans Noise Protocol. Of these sites, eight locations are considered severely impacted and at several receptors abatement is not reasonable. Within the corridor six noise barriers are considered reasonable and feasible to construct.

Waters and Wetlands

Both permanent and temporary impacts would occur to wetlands and waters of the U.S. at the five jurisdictional locations in the I-15 corridor. The proposed project would result in approximately 0.16 hectare (1.04 acre) of permanent impacts to wetlands and 0.60 hectare (1.48 acres) of permanent impacts to USACOE jurisdictional wetlands, 0.54 hectare (1.3 acre) of permanent impacts to DFG jurisdictional wetlands, and 0.42 hectare (1.04 acres) of permanent impacts to waters of the United States. A total of 0.64 hectare (1.6 acres) of temporary impacts to USACOE jurisdictional wetlands, 2.1 hectares (5.1 acres) of temporary impacts to DFG jurisdictional areas, and 1.97 hectares (4.9 acres) of temporary impacts to waters of the United States. Since no individual permanent wetland impact exceed the threshold for an individual permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Nationwide Permits will be obtained for the proposed work.

Growth

The project is only one part of necessary infrastructure required to efficiently support planned and approved growth. The Managed Lanes Project is not expected to induce unplanned growth, as all areas within the corridor have adopted local plans.

Threatened and Endangered Species

A total of 17.48 hectares (43.2 acres) of coastal sage scrub (CSS) habitat and 15 territories (11 pair, 4 single) of coastal California gnatcatchers would be impacted. This would be a direct loss of habitat likely used by gnatcatchers for breeding, foraging, and shelter.

Visual

With the proposed project, the suburban and semi-rural character of the I-15 corridor would become noticeably more urban. Generally, this change would affect freeway users more than it would those who view the freeway from adjacent communities. Views from the freeway would be diminished in quality by the increase in size and scale of the freeway. In addition, views to the freeway would also be adversely affected at right-of-way edges and community entrances. Overall changes in character are considered low to moderately-high.

Construction Impacts

Noise produced by construction equipment on the proposed project would occur with varying intensities and duration during eight basic phases of construction. These construction phases would occur over an estimated 13 year period.

Because of the different phases of construction, no single location would experience a long-term period of construction noise.

During construction, it is proposed to keep the same number of freeway lanes open during heavy demand times. This would be accomplished through the use of temporary concrete barriers and reduced shoulder and/or lane widths. Traffic would be shifted towards the median so outside widening could be completed. Once the outside widening is completed, traffic would be shifted to the outside so construction within the median construction could occur.

Freeway lanes would be subject to closure during off peak times. Complete freeway closures would generally weekdays between 11:00 PM and 5:00 AM and weekends between 3:00 AM and 10:00 AM. Freeway detours would be required for nighttime bridge work and where ramps and bridges are closed.

With the No-Build Alternative, there would be no impacts to sensitive resources. However, runoff from the Lake Hodges Bridge would remain untreated and existing noise impacts to residents would be unabated.

Table S1: Summary of Impacts From Alternatives

Potential Impact		Managed Lanes Alternative with proposed measures to minimize harm	No Action Alternative
Land use	**Consistency with general plans**	Minor inconsistencies with city and community plans for sound wall and retaining wall heights	No Impact.
Pedestrian and bicycle facilities		Temporary closures of Lake Hodges bike trail will be required. Temporary detour of Mira Mesa bike path.	No impacts
Air quality		Air quality impacts of Carbon Monoxide remain below State and Federal air quality standards	Air quality impacts of Carbon Monoxide remain below State and Federal air quality standards.
Noise		Existing noise levels range from 49 to 82 dBA. After project levels range from 53 to 83 dBA. Approximately 4 homes with doubling of noise (10+ dBA). Temporary construction noise impacts will occur.	Many areas exceed the NAC due to existing conditions.
Water quality		Minimal impacts. Runoff from Lake Hodges bridge will be treated.	No change from existing.
Wetlands and waters of the U.S.		Totals for five drainages are: 0.16 hectare (0.4 acre) of permanent impacts to USACOE jurisdictional wetlands, 0.54 hectare (1.3 acre) of permanent impacts to DFG jurisdictional wetlands, and 0.42 hectare (1.04 acres) of permanent impacts to waters of the United States. A total of 0.64 hectare (1.6 acres) of temporary impacts to USACOE jurisdictional wetlands, 2.1 hectares (5.1 acres) of temporary impacts to DFG jurisdictional areas, and 1.97 hectares (4.9 acres) of temporary impacts to waters of the United States .	No impacts.
Wildlife		Temporary impacts to wildlife corridors during construction.	No impacts.
Threatened or endangered species		11 pair, 4 single coastal California gnatcatchers would be impacted.	No impacts.
Cultural resources		No impacts.	No impacts.
Hazardous waste sites		No hazardous waste sites found.	No impacts.
Visual		Changes in character due to introduction of walls and direct access ramps are low to moderately high.	No impacts.
Construction Impacts		Temporary construction impacts would occur to noise, traffic, and air quality.	Minor temporary construction impacts would occur to noise, traffic, and air quality due to planned operational projects.
Cumulative impacts		The proposed project would not substantially add to cumulative impacts as all impacts are mitigated.	The proposed project would not substantially add to cumulative impacts.
Growth inducement		Planned growth accommodated.	Planned growth not supported.

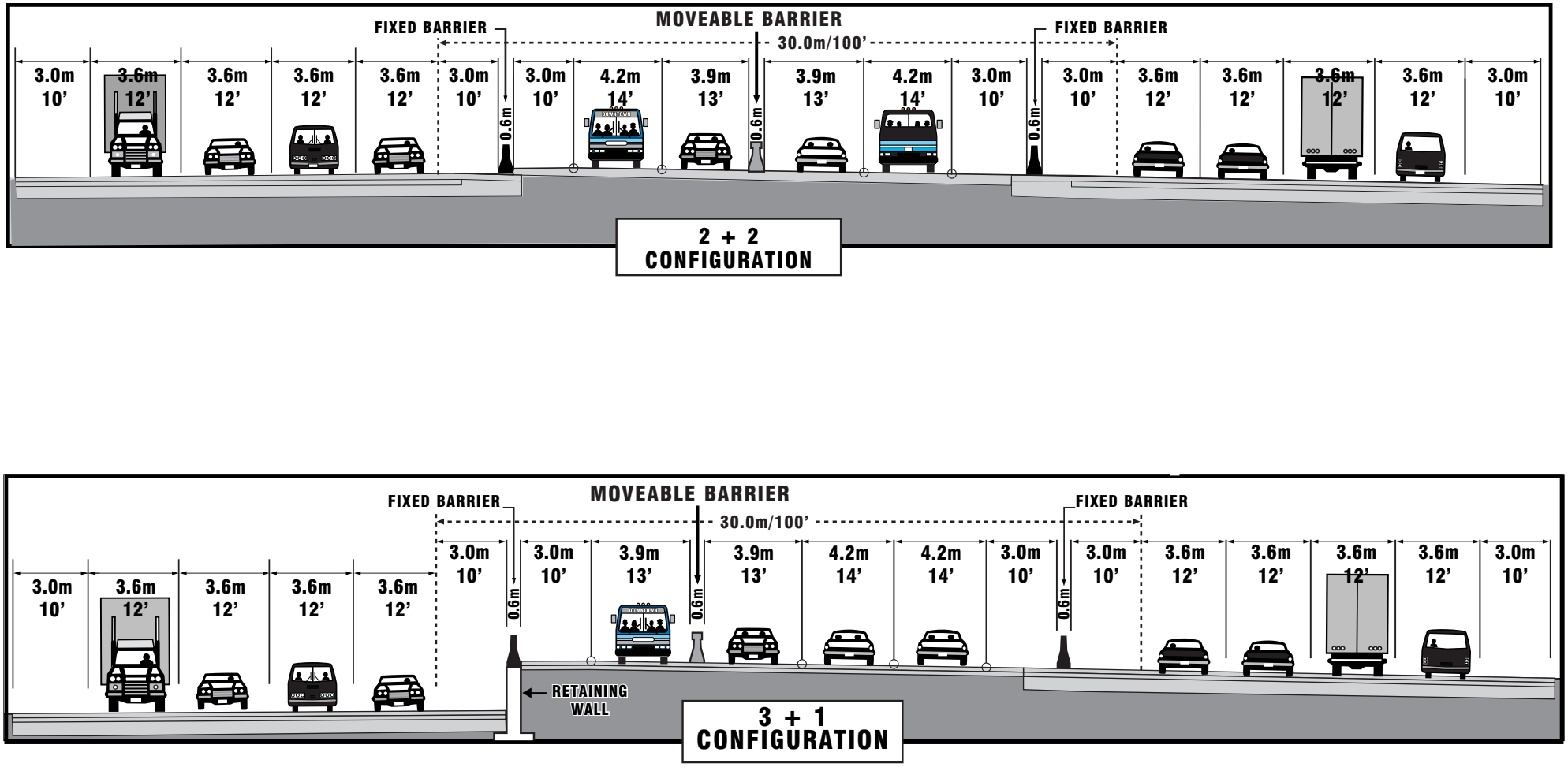
Mitigation for impacts can be found in Chapter 3 and in Appendix F: Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Record

Permits and Approvals

The following permits and approvals are required.

Table S2: Required Approvals

Agency	Approval Required
United States Fish and Wildlife Service	Consultation pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (completed)
United States Army Corp of Engineers	Nationwide Permit per Section 404 of the Clean Water Act
Regional Water Quality Control Board	Statewide NPDES permit per Section 402 of the Clean Water Act
Regional Water Quality Control Board	Water Quality Certification per Section 401 of the Clean Water Act
California Department of Fish and Game	1601 Streambed Alteration Agreement per Section 1601 of the California Fish and Game Code
City of San Diego	Freeway Agreement for DAR
City of Escondido	Freeway Agreement for DAR



STATE OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DISTRICT 11 ● ADVANCED PLANNING
Not To Scale

FIGURE S-1

PICTORIAL CROSS-SECTIONS